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STEPHEN KING'S

M.



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MARVEL
LIMITED SERIES
2 of 4

MARC GUGGENHEIM • ALEX MALEEV

STEPHEN KING'S

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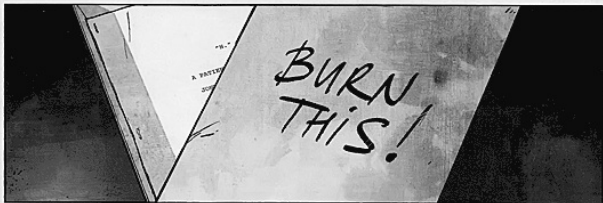
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Dear Charlie...

Thank you for your note after Johnny's death. You saw his obituary, of course. "Accidental Death" can cover a multitude of sins, can't it? Johnny's death was reported as the result of a fall, and of course he did fall—at a spot we all knew well.

But it was no accident. I know it was suicide.

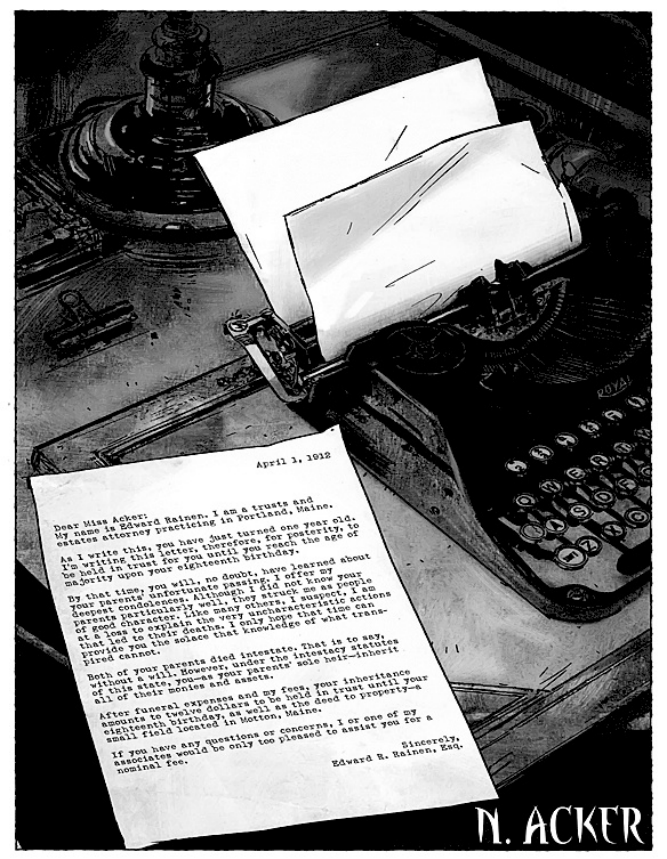
As a doctor yourself, you know psychiatrists like Johnny have an extremely high rate of suicide. It's as if the patient's woes are a kind of acid, eating away at the psychic defenses of their therapists. But I think—and this gets me to the material I'm enclosing with this letter—I think Johnny's suicide was caused—prompted?—by a particular patient.

The patient (Johnny only ever referred to him as "N.") came to him complaining of insomnia and OCD-like symptoms. N. traced his symptoms back to a visit to a field in Motton, not far from where we grew up, Charlie. He had some story about seeing a circle of stones—stones that fluctuated in number. He talked of even numbers being good and odd numbers being bad... and he said that, in the middle of the circle, there was some dark, evil force, trying to get out.

I'm enclosing what I found in Johnny's personal effects. This box. The handwriting—"burn this"—is Johnny's and, well... I didn't listen. Like Pandora, my curiosity got the better of me and I opened it.

I wish I hadn't.

—Sheila.



April 1, 1912

Dear Miss Acker:
My name is Edward Rainen. I am a trusts and
estates attorney practicing in Portland, Maine.

As I write this, you have just turned one year old.
I'm writing this letter, therefore, for posterity, to
be held in trust for you until you reach the age of
majority upon your eighteenth birthday.

By that time, you will, no doubt, have learned about
your parents' unfortunate passing. I offer my
deepest condolences. Although I did not know your
parents particularly well, they struck me as people
of good character. Like many others, I suspect, I am
at a loss to explain the very uncharacteristic actions
that led to their deaths. I only hope that time can
provide you the solace that knowledge of what trans-
pired cannot.

Both of your parents died intestate. That is to say,
without a will. However, under the intestacy statutes
of this state, you—as your parents' sole heir—inher-
it all of their monies and assets.

After funeral expenses and my fees, your inheritance
amounts to twelve dollars to be held in trust until your
eighteenth birthday, as well as the deed to property—a
small field located in Motton, Maine.

If you have any questions or concerns, I or one of my
associates would be only too pleased to assist you for a
nominal fee.

Sincerely,
Edward R. Rainen, Esq.

N. ACKER

Dear Diary,
I did something interesting-
unexpected today.

JUNE 16, 2007

I went into town.

It's changed so much!
Everything so different.
It was like taking a step
into the future.

I was scared, a little. Well, more
than a little, if I'm being honest.

Everything--everyone--
moved so fast! The people,
yes. Everyone in a hurry.

But the cars especially.
These cars, so sleek. They
all look like stones from
a river now.

Like stones. That's
funny. That's my
subconscious talking.

Funny.

One step, one small, wrong step
off the curb, as easy as falling
off a log--

--easier--

--and it would be over.
One of the speeding
stones would fly into me
and it would all be over.

And there's the temptation.
There's always the temptation.
My constant companion, that.
My only companion.



But a companion to always be denied.

McGruff's Hardware is long gone. The people I asked about it didn't even remember it ever being in town. Sad.

But one kind man pointed me towards a similar store, another store he said was called "Ace."

Ace is not a good name for more than one reason.



But the store had what I needed to suit my purpose.



The manager, a fine young man, seemed concerned the chain would be too heavy for me to carry.



I told him I was stronger than I looked, if not younger.



And unless my companion has her way, I won't depart this Earth anytime soon.

"IT WAS LIKE A SHADOW HAD FALLEN OVER MY LIFE..."

June 22, 2007

"MY MIND KEPT GOING BACK TO ACKERMAN'S FIELD."

"I WAS COUNTING LOTS OF THINGS BY THEN, AND TOUCHING THINGS..."

"TO MAKE SURE I UNDERSTOOD THEIR PLACES IN THE WORLD, THE REAL WORLD, MY WORLD."

"AND I'D STARTED TO PLACE THINGS, TOO."

"ALWAYS EVEN NUMBERS OF THINGS, AND USUALLY IN A CIRCLE OR ON A DIAGONAL LINE."

"BECAUSE CIRCLES AND DIAGONALS KEEP THINGS OUT."

"USUALLY, THAT IS, BUT NEVER PERMANENTLY. ONE SMALL ACCIDENT AND FOURTEEN BECOMES THIRTEEN, OR EIGHT BECOMES SEVEN."

"IN EARLY SEPTEMBER, MY YOUNGER DAUGHTER VISITED AND COMMENTED ON HOW TIRED I LOOKED."

"ARE YOU OVERWORKING? YOU LOOK TERRIBLE. ARE YOU TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF?"

"SHE NOTICED THAT ALL THE LIVING ROOM KNICKKNACKS--"

"--STUFF HER MOM HADN'T TAKEN AFTER THE DIVORCE--"

"--HAD BEEN PLACED IN WHAT SHE CALLED 'CROP CIRCLES.'"

"THIS TIME IN FULL DAYLIGHT."

"I THOUGHT IF I SAW IT IN DAYLIGHT--"

"--AW, JUST A FEW MEANINGLESS ROCKS STANDING AROUND IN AN UNCUT HAYFIELD--"

"--I'D REALIZE HOW FOOLISH THE WHOLE THING WAS, AND MY OBSESSION WOULD BLOW AWAY LIKE A DANDELION PUFF IN A STRONG BREEZE."

"WHAT, YOU'RE MAKING CROP CIRCLES NOW?"

"YOU'RE GETTING A LITTLE WIGGY IN YOUR OLD AGE, AREN'T YOU, PAPA?"

"AND THAT WAS WHEN I DECIDED I HAD TO GO BACK TO ACKERMAN'S FIELD."

"I WANTED THAT, BECAUSE COUNTING, TOUCHING AND PLACING--THOSE THINGS ARE A LOT OF WORK."

"A LOT OF RESPONSIBILITY."



"IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL DAY, NOT A CLOUD IN THE SKY. THE LEAVES WERE STILL GREEN, BUT THE AIR HAD THAT BRILLIANT CLARITY YOU ONLY GET WHEN THE SEASONS CHANGE."

"I FELT *GOOD*, I REMEMBER THAT. I FELT CERTAIN I WAS GOING TO PUT ALL THIS CRAZINESS TO REST."



"I DROVE OVER THE ANDROSCOGGIN IN HARLOW--"

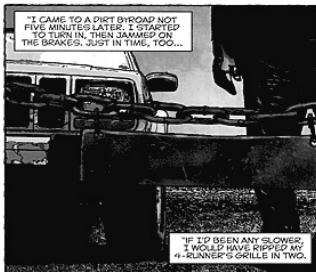
"--THE WATER ON EITHER SIDE OF THE OLD BALE ROAD BRIDGE BRIGHT ENOUGH TO KNOCK YOUR EYE'S OUT--"

"--AND I SAW A FISH JUMP. IT MADE ME LAUGH OUT LOUD."



"I HADN'T LAUGHED LIKE THAT SINCE THE EVENING IN ACKERMAN'S FIELD. AND IT SOUNDED SO GOOD I DID IT AGAIN."

"I CAME TO A DIRT BYROAD NOT FIVE MINUTES LATER. I STARTED TO TURN IN, THEN JAMMED ON THE BRAKES. JUST IN TIME, TOO..."



"IF I'D BEEN ANY SLOWER, I WOULD HAVE RIPPED MY 4-RUNNER'S GRILLE IN TWO."

"THERE WAS A CHAIN ACROSS THE ROAD, AND A NEW SIGN HANGING FROM IT."





She's getting stronger,
my companion.

As if she can sense him,
recognize him for who he is.
What he is. A way out. A
way to be free.

I've done what I
could. I've tried--

--tried so hard--

--to keep him out,
keep him away.

Keep him
safe.



It's not my fault he's not
strong enough to listen.

No, not my
fault at all.

And I wonder if those are
my thoughts or the thoughts
of my companion. Or maybe
both.



Maybe, on this, at least.
we're in agreement. After
all these years.

Wouldn't that be ironic?
Wouldn't that be funny?

Yes, funny. The joke's
on me. As per usual.
The world is so funny.

"IT WAS
FUNNY..."



"FUNNY, BUT THERE WERE
SEVEN STONES AGAIN."

"JUST SEVEN."



"BUT NOT SO FUNNY...IN
THE MIDDLE OF THEM--"

"--I DON'T KNOW JUST HOW
TO EXPLAIN THIS SO YOU'LL
UNDERSTAND--"

"--THERE WAS A
FADED PLACE."



"I FELT THAT IF I
WALKED IN THERE--"

"--AND PART OF
ME WANTED TO--"

"--THAT IF I WALKED IN
THERE, I COULD PUNCH
OUT WITH ONE FIST AND
TEAR RIGHT THROUGH THE
FABRIC OF REALITY."





"IT SAID MY NAME."

"I THINK I
SCREAMED."

AAAAAAAAAAAA!

"BUT I'M
NOT SURE."



"BECAUSE BY THEN THE WIND
HAD BECOME A GALE THAT
WAS ROARING IN MY EARS."

"I *SHOULD* HAVE SCREAMED.
I HAD EVERY RIGHT TO SCREAM."



"BECAUSE IT KNEW
MY NAME!"

"COULD WE
BE DONE?"



"I WONDER
IF WE COULD BE
DONE FOR
TODAY."

"I KNOW
IT'S EARLY,
BUT I'M VERY
TIRED."



"I CAN
PRESCRIBE A
SEDATIVE IF YOU
WANT. SOMETHING
MILD, BUT MORE
RELIABLE THAN
AMBIEN OR
LUNESTA."

"THAT WOULD
BE GOOD, VERY
GOOD, BUT CAN I
ASK YOU A
FAVOR?"

"PRESCRIBE
EITHER TWENTY,
FORTY OR
SIXTY."

"THOSE
ARE ALL GOOD
NUMBERS."

JUNE 29, 2007

HOW'VE YOU
BEEN SLEEPING? HAS
THE PRESCRIPTION
HELPED?

MUCH BETTER,
THANKS. AND THE
OCD'S A LITTLE
BETTER, TOO.

I'VE BEEN
SLEEPING
THROUGH THE
NIGHT AGAIN.

WELL... SOME
OF THE NIGHTS.
THERE WERE
DREAMS, OF
COURSE.

IN THE DREAMS,
I WAS ALWAYS IN
THAT FIELD.

"THE BLACKNESS
SPILLED OUT OF THE
CIRCLE LIKE OIL.

"AND WHEN I
LOOKED UP...

"I SAW THE SKY HAD CRACKED
OPEN FROM EAST TO WEST AND
A TERRIBLE BLACK LIGHT WAS
POURING OUT...

"LIGHT THAT
WAS ALIVE.

"AND HUNGRY.





"THAT'S WHEN I'D WAKE UP,
DRENCHED WITH SWEAT,
SOMETIMES SCREAMING.



"THEN, IN EARLY
DECEMBER, I GOT
A LETTER AT THE
OFFICE.

"I COULD FEEL
A SMALL OBJECT
INSIDE.



"IF THERE'D BEEN
A LETTER--

"--THERE WASN'T A
LETTER, BUT IF THERE
HAD BEEN ONE--

"--IT WOULD HAVE
SAID, 'I TRIED TO
KEEP YOU OUT.'



"IT'S NOT
MY FAULT...



"AND MAYBE NOT
YOURS, EITHER.



"BUT EITHER
WAY...

"THIS KEY

"AND ALL IT
OPENS

"IS YOURS
NOW.

AF

"TAKE
GOOD CARE
OF IT."

AND DID
YOU?

TAKE
CARE OF
IT?

TAKE IT
BACK OUT TO
THE FIELD.

DOC...

"WHAT DO
YOU THINK?

"OF COURSE, THE
KEY FIT THE LOCK, AS
I KNEW IT WOULD.

"THAT FIELD IS
NOW MY FIELD.

"THOSE STONES ARE
NOW MY STONES.

"AND WHATEVER IT IS
THEY'RE KEEPING IN IS
MY RESPONSIBILITY.

"I KNEW THERE'D BE EIGHT
STONES IN ACKERMAN'S
FIELD AND I WAS RIGHT.

"I UNDERSTOOD
OTHER THINGS, TOO.

"ONE WAS THAT I HAD
ACTIVATED THE PLACE
JUST BY LOOKING
AT IT.



HUMAN EYES TAKE AWAY THE EIGHTH STONE, A CAMERA LENS WILL PUT IT BACK, BUT WON'T LOCK IT IN PLACE.

I HAD TO KEEP RENEWING THE PROTECTION WITH SYMBOLIC ACTS.



I HAVE DAYS--

--MANY OF THEM, ESPECIALLY LAST WINTER, WHEN I FELT PRETTY MUCH LIKE MY OLD SELF AGAIN--

--WHEN I'M SURE THAT EVERYTHING I THOUGHT I SAW IN ACKERMAN'S FIELD WAS IN MY OWN HEAD.

THAT ALL THIS OCD STUFF IS JUST A MENTAL STUTTER.



THEN I HAVE OTHER DAYS--

--THEY STARTED AGAIN THIS SPRING--

--WHEN I'M SURE IT'S ALL TRUE: I ACTIVATED SOMETHING.



"AND IN SO DOING, I BECAME THE LATEST BATON CARRIER IN A LONG, LONG LINE OF THEM, MAYBE GOING ALL THE WAY BACK TO PREHISTORIC TIMES."



I KNOW THAT SOUNDS CRAZY--

--WHY ELSE WOULD I BE TELLING IT TO A PSYCHIATRIST?--

--AND I HAVE WHOLE DAYS WHEN I'M SURE IT IS CRAZY...



I ESPECIALLY THOUGHT THAT LAST WINTER, WHEN THINGS WERE GOOD, OR AT LEAST BETTER.

THEN IN APRIL OF THIS YEAR, THINGS STARTED GETTING BAD AGAIN...



"I WAS COUNTING MORE, TOUCHING MORE, AND PLACING JUST ABOUT EVERYTHING THAT WASN'T NAILED DOWN IN CIRCLES OR DIAGONALS."

"I STARTED HAVING NIGHTMARES AGAIN."



"ONE NIGHT IN EARLY MAY, I WOKE ON MY BEDROOM FLOOR, SCREAMING."

"AND IT CAME TO ME THAT I WASN'T TOO LATE THAT IT HAD ONLY STARTED TO COME AWAKE."

"THE KEY, THE ONE I GOT IN THE MAIL, WAS IN MY HOME SAFE. I GOT IT OUT..."



"...AND DROVE BACK TO MOTTON."

"OVER THE BRIDGE, PAST THE CEMETERY, UP THAT DAMNED DIRT TRACK."



"I DIDN'T THINK ABOUT IT BECAUSE IT WASN'T THE SORT OF DECISION YOU HAVE TO CONSIDER."



"THE HAY WAS GROWING IN THE FIELD AGAIN, AND MOST OF THE SUGAR BUSHES WERE TURNING GREEN..."

"BUT I SAW A SCARY THING."

"THE LEAVES OF THE BUSHES
WERE BLACK INSTEAD OF GREEN.

"THE BRANCHES
WERE TWISTED
AND..."



"AND THEY SEEMED
TO MAKE LETTERS..."

"LETTERS WHICH
SEEMED TO SPELL
A NAME."

"IT'S NAME."

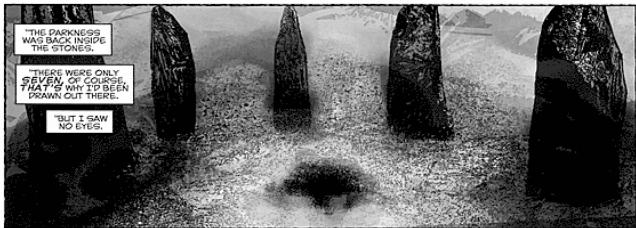
"IT'S NOT SAFE TO
SAY THE NAME ALOUD."



"THE DARKNESS
WAS BACK INSIDE
THE STONES."

"THERE WERE ONLY
SEVEN, OF COURSE.
THAT'S WHY IT'D BEEN
DRAWN OUT THERE."

"BUT I SAW
NO EYES."



"FORCING MYSELF TO
GO DOWN TO THAT RING
OF STONES WAS THE
HARDEST THING I'VE
EVER DONE."

"THE AIR BEGAN TO
TASTE DISEASED."

"AND I KNEW *IT*
WAS COMING."

"IT WAS COMING
AND IF I SAW IT
THIS CLOSE UP,
IT WOULD DRIVE
ME MAD."

"BUT SOMETHING
DROVE ME ONWARD."



"I WAS STILL IN TIME, BUT
I WASN'T HONESTLY SURE
IF THAT WAS A BLESSING
OR CURSE."





"AND WHEN I GOT THERE, I...

"I TOUCHED THE STONES.



"ONE AFTER THE OTHER. EVERY TWO STONES. JUST THE EVEN NUMBERS.



"AND BY THE TIME I GOT TO EIGHT, IT WAS GONE.



"AND WHEN I STEPPED BACK, I FELT MYSELF *DIVIDE*.

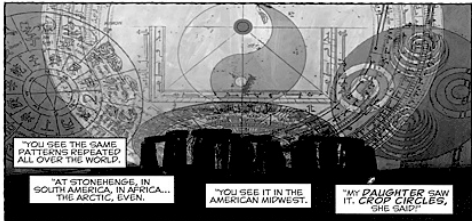
"BETWEEN THE PART OF MYSELF THAT KNEW THE WHOLE THING WAS JUST A PRODUCT OF MY DISEASED IMAGINATION.

"AND THE OTHER PART THAT KNEW IT WAS ALL TRUE.

"AND IT'S *THAT* PART THAT UNDERSTOOD WHY THINGS HAD GOTTEN BETTER FOR A WHILE.



"IT'S THE SOLSTICE, DO YOU SEE?



"YOU SEE THE SAME PATTERNS REPEATED ALL OVER THE WORLD.

"AT STONEHENGE, IN SOUTH AMERICA, IN AFRICA... THE ARCTIC, EVEN.

"YOU SEE IT IN THE AMERICAN MIDWEST.

"MY DAUGHTER SAW IT. CROP CIRCLES, SHE SAID."







To Whom it May
Concern:



She's won. My
companion has
won.



Which is ironic since "won" sounds
like an odd number and odd numbers
are always bad.



But for years I
have denied her.

Years I've spent living
artificially, beyond my
means. My physical
means. I mean.



My companion, my constant friend, my
North Star, my eternal flame. Always sitting
on my shoulder. Always telling me---whispering
to me---

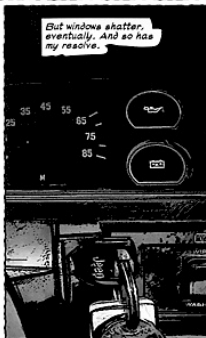


"There's a way out.
It would be easy. It
would be so easy."



And I've kept the notion at
bay for years. For decades.

I've kept her at bay
the way a good window
will hold back a storm.



But windows shatter,
eventually. And so has
my resolve.



I'm ready.



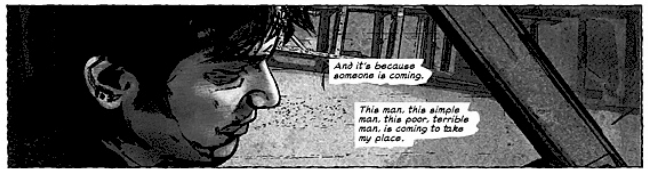
I'm ready for my
companion to have
her way with me,
to give her what
she wants.



*Her heart's only
desire.*

*Her purpose
for being.*

I'm ready.



*And it's because
someone is coming.*

*This man, this simple
man, this poor, terrible
man, is coming to take
my place.*



*Thank you, Nathan.
Thank you so much.*



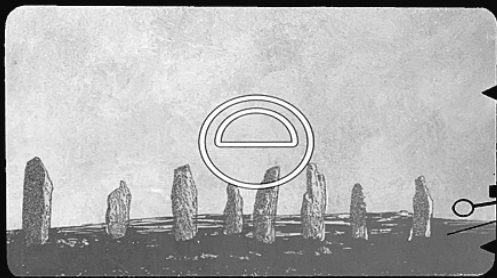
Thank you.



*Sincerely,
Norma Acker*

STEPHEN KING'S

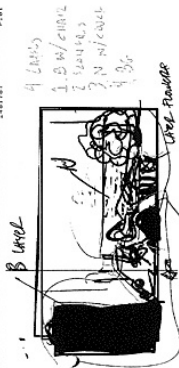
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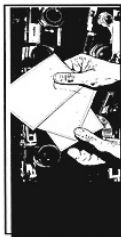


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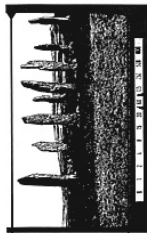
SKETCHBOOK

Check out Alex Maleev's storyboards from the original N. webisodes.

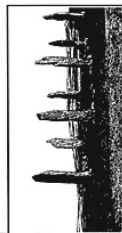




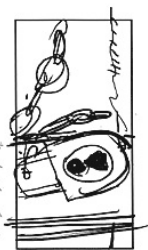
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Leather



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SHOT 2



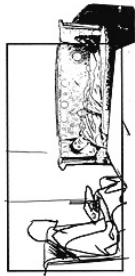
WICKEDNESS

17



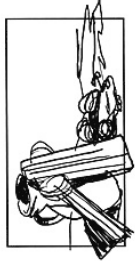
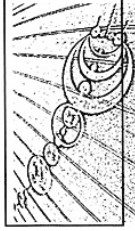
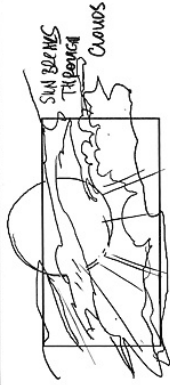
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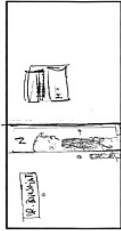
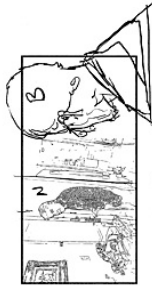


PUNCH IN

STRAWS HAVE BACK TO
BLAIR AS WE PUSH
ON N' FACESONGS HAVE
GIVE UP



14.2



14.3



ONE WILL LAST



Alternate for the #2 Cover

STEPHEN KING'S N



NEXT ISSUE





Can you catch a mental illness the same way you can catch a cold? Until he met patient N., Doctor John Bonsaint would have said that such an idea was ridiculous. But despite himself, Bonsaint finds the curious case of N. plaguing him, night and day. But how far down the rabbit hole will he follow his patient... and what monsters lie at the bottom?

Based on the harrowing short story by acclaimed author Stephen King, *N.* brings together the team of fan-favorite writer Marc Guggenheim (*Amazing Spider-Man*, ABC's *Eli Stone*) and blockbuster artist Alex Maleev (*Daredevil*, *Spider-Woman* motion comic) in an ever-deepening cycle of madness and terror.

DIRECT EDITION

PARENTAL ADVISORY
FOR STRONG LANGUAGE & CONTENT



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